

The University of Chicago

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF EXORCISM
IN THE GOSPEL OF MARK

A PART OF A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED
TO THE FACULTY OF THE DIVINITY SCHOOL
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

1933

By
WILLIAM V. ROOSA

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PART V
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The Gospel of Mark interprets Jesus' career and his significance for humanity primarily in terms of his conquest of invisible evil spirits that wrought havoc among men. We have sought to discover the reasons for this central emphasis upon these exorcistic activities. We have seen that these reasons were bound up inseparably with the maleficent operations of demons in relation to all human interests. First-century life was everywhere infested with these demonic hordes that were the bearers of all of men's ills. Jews and Gentiles alike were threatened by demons, and made provisions to conquer them as the indispensable prerequisites to a satisfying life for the individual, for the family, and for society as a whole. We have interpreted demonology and exorcism in Mark against the background of the conditions and needs of the time and of the vital meaning of such phenomena in the Roman world. We have been concerned chiefly with the social and religious values that the release from the assaults of evil spirits brought to people in their daily experiences. With this practical rather than technical interest uppermost, we have throughout this study included under the term exorcism all types of both apotropaic and expulsive practices.

A. Exorcism in Early Christianity

Although exorcism occupies a bigger place proportionately in Mark than in other early Christian writings, it is by no means limited to this document or to the people it served. Rather it represents one of the major interests that persisted in the Christian movement for centuries. This is reflected, with varying emphases, in much of the Christian literature from Paul to Augustine. It shows that the need for freedom from the attacks of these hostile superhuman powers was a basic human need which early Christianity met. The Synoptic Gospels, Acts, and many of the Epistles and the Apocalypse of John all show that the supreme enemies to the achievement of a worthwhile life, for present and future, are Satan and his demonic hosts. The same atmosphere prevails in the Christian circles represented by the Apostolic Fathers, the Apologists, the New Testament Apocrypha, and leading Church Fathers from Tertullian to Augustine.

The functions of the satanic forces vary greatly, according to the dominant problems and needs of the particular group represented. Sickness, temptations to all kinds of moral perversions, persecution of the faithful, the teaching of heretical doctrines, the promulgation of pagan cults and current social practices, and many other activities that endanger the individual or the Christian group are attributed to demonic sources.

Methods of conquering the demons likewise vary, both those ascribed to Jesus and those practiced by the Christians. In some accounts Jesus is credited with the expulsion of demons from possessed individuals; in others his victories over Satan are interpreted in cosmic terms. The methods employed by Christian exorcists include the use of the name of Jesus (often accompanied by a recital of his deeds of power), breathing upon the possessed, and the use of the names of angels, of passages of Scripture, and of the cross. In some cases great stress is placed upon various forms of piety, particularly prayer and fasting. Baptism and the Lord's Supper are often thought to possess great sacramental efficacy in protecting Christians from the malicious spirits.

The general trend was toward more elaborate forms of procedure until the task required the attention of a special official group of exorcists within the church.

B. Exorcism in Hebrew and Jewish Circles

The popular religion of the Hebrews was permeated by ever-present fear of demons that lurked everywhere to do them harm. These evil powers were intimately associated with all the vital experiences of the people. They threatened them in their attempts at a satisfactory adjustment to geographical and climatic environment, in the problems connected with making their living, in their social relationships, in relation to disease and death, and in their contacts with other tribal and national groups.

The fact of demonic activity is supported by evidence from Assyria, Babylonia, Arabia, and Egypt; by ancient Syrian and Canaanite practices; by excavations in these regions; and by present-day practices in Syria, Arabia, and Palestine; as well as by the Old Testament.

There are but slight traces of the existence and activity of evil spirits recognized by the official Yahweh cult. Those that are mentioned are brought directly under the control of Yahweh as his representatives. The Old Testament writers in their attempts to crush out these popular beliefs and practices have suppressed in their records much of the original demonic significance of many customs and events. But many evidences of the

prevalence and the power of these spirits of evil are visible under the surface of the accounts.

For this and other reasons there is in the Old Testament no attempt at a careful description or classification of demons. For the most part they are vague and undefined spirits but potent for harm. Most of them are not definitely personalized. They resemble the jinn of Arabic lore, being closely bound together by a social solidarity that includes the whole group. Like the human society in which they operate their unity is strengthened by the bond of blood revenge. This fact increased the dread in which they were held.

In the exilic and post-exilic periods the baffling, crushing, and inescapable ills of life made demons just as real and as sinister as ever. The people were still living in a pre-scientific age, without adequate knowledge of the causes of these disastrous experiences, and with no scientific technique of control over the powerful physical forces of their environment. The natural result was to interpret these causes as social objects (i.e., as more or less personalized forces), and act toward them accordingly.

The belief in these demonic forces operative in their life and the methods of adjusting themselves to their activities are to be understood in the light of their tribal experiences and general Semitic racial heritage for millenniums, rather than in terms of direct borrowing of a system of thought from any group. Contacts with the more elaborate systems of other peoples, especially Chaldean, Persian, and Egyptian, modified to a marked degree the late Jewish demonology. This is seen particularly in the strong trend toward personalizing the evil spirits, in the development of a strong dualism involving the organization of demons into a hierarchy of evil powers under a demonic chief (often Satan, though various names are used), and in a growing interest in explaining the origin and nature of the demons.

The general acceptance of demonology in this period is amply attested by its prominence in Apocryphal, New Testament, and other literature of the time. Its scarcity in the Mishna is to be explained as an attempt of the official religious leaders in Judaism to suppress this emphasis as dangerous to the orthodox Yahweh cult. But the popular attitudes were too strong to be ignored; hence they found official recognition in the later portions of the Talmud. Demonology and exorcism find expression both in Palestinian and in Babylonian circles, with the greater prominence in the latter.

Various methods of exorcism were used, but in general they may be characterized as either individual or social. The first were performed chiefly by private individuals and were primarily concerned with averting or expelling ills from individuals. The

second were generally performed by the official religious leaders as public ritual and were for the purpose of protecting the whole social order. This distinction cannot always be maintained but it usually holds. Practices of exorcism which were social in character and were too deeply rooted in popular custom to be eliminated were taken over by the priestly system, "baptized" into the name of Yahweh and continued under official control as rites to the national deity. The most striking example of this is the scapegoat ceremony.

Private Jewish practices of apotropaic or expulsive significance included (1) general precautionary measures (such as keeping away from ruins, toilets, and cemeteries; washing of hands; avoiding even numbers and things that were wrapped, sealed, measured or numbered; fasting; eating salt; etc.); (2) a life of piety and devotion to the law of God; (3) the use of various charms and amulets; (4) the use of Scripture passages; (5) the use of the name of God; (6) of the names of angels; (7) of other powerful names (Jesus and Jewish heroes); (8) the employment of miscellaneous formulae, objects, and practices such as fumigation, the use of roots, of spittle, of the circle or the cross, touching with the hand, and anointing with oil. Some of these methods had the full approval of the official cult; hence from one point of view they were definitely social though performed by individuals. Others were unapproved by official Judaism.

Social exorcism was needed to supplement the private practices. It was the most characteristically Jewish type, and was involved in much of the official ritual. In fact, the protective value of most cult rites was one of their major functions. They were performed for the purpose of establishing with the deity the relationship that would guarantee his continued gifts of food, shelter, health, and all the other necessities of a prosperous and happy existence. This involved protection from all hostile environing forces, largely demonic, or means of insuring victory over them. The official cult leaders gave little open recognition to this function of the ritual because of their positive interests in emphasizing an undivided loyalty to Yahweh and his demands upon them. But they regarded these rites as most efficacious for averting and expelling demons. These rituals had Yahweh's full sanction and authority back of them. They were also broader in scope than private practices, for they insured the general welfare of the community or the nation as a whole.

The chief official methods and objects of apotropaic and exorcistic value were (1) strict obedience to the Torah in a life of genuine piety (including the recital of the Shema twice daily, regular morning and evening prayers, reading of the Scriptures,

especially passages containing the divine name, the use of Scripture texts on phylacteries and doorposts, the wearing of fringes on their garments, and the use of covenant salt), (2) the priestly vestments (especially bells and the oracle-pouch), (3) the "Aaronic" blessing containing the threefold use of the divine name, (4) the use of incense, (5) various forms of ritual purification (including blood rituals, the use of water, the sprinkling of ashes, the scapegoat ceremony, and the blowing of the ram's horn at New Year's).

The official cult leaders were strongly antagonistic to the performance of exorcism and allied practices by private individuals as violations of the law against all kinds of magic. The name of Yahweh was too sacred and too potent for indiscriminate use in such ways. The use of the names of foreign deities would imply recognition of their power. This would be a violation of monotheism, hence disloyalty to Yahweh, and would endanger the welfare of the whole nation by bringing the wrath of the deity upon them. The strong social solidarity that bound the Jews into a unified national faith demanded complete conformity to established practices for the sake of the common good. Furthermore the official leaders considered themselves the guardians of the nation's welfare, who must administer and perpetuate these sacred institutions unchanged. They viewed with fear and resentment the assumption of any of their exclusive powers and prerogatives by any presumptuous, untrained and unauthorized religious leaders. Hence in prohibiting the practice of exorcism they considered themselves loyal to their God and to the best interests of their people.

C. Exorcism in Roman Life

In early Roman life there was no interest in organization, technical terminology, formal classification, or intellectual interpretation of hostile spirits. These spirits were undefined, vaguely-understood potencies that were invisible but an ever-present menace to humanity. They were inseparably linked with that sense of fear and awe that characterized Roman religio in all stages of its development.

These dangerous powers were involved both in man's relation to the physical and natural forces of his universe and in his contacts with other people, especially with strange or foreign groups. They were intimately associated with all the vital processes of food-getting, happy family life, the maintenance of health, and the successful continuance of the whole social and political order.

Very few of these forces were personalized. Silvanus and

Mars, the spirits of the wild, uninhabited regions and the dangerous animals they harbored, and of the arts of warfare, were notable exceptions; but even these did not start fully developed.

Ghosts of the dead occupied a larger place in Roman thought and practice than any other type of harmful spirit.

By the imperial period, influences from Greek and Oriental cultures brought about changes in the Roman thought about demonic powers, but very little change in their basic functions in daily life. Through these influences the spirits (1) were classified in accordance with the Greek terminology, (2) became more personalized, and (3) often received individual names.

The growing complexity of city life, with a high degree of social, economic, and political insecurity for the average individual, intensified the sense of insufficiency of his own powers, increased emotional instability, and swelled the number of those who were "possessed" by demons. These tendencies were augmented during the period of "the Terror" under Nero and succeeding emperors, with a corresponding increase in the fear of evil spirits.

The spread of astrological beliefs and practices contributed a heavy quota to the already prevalent dread of demons, emphasizing particularly their cosmic significance. The growing influence in the Graeco-Roman world of a thoroughgoing dualism such as developed in Judaism and Mithraism tended to confirm the existing fears of sinister spirits by "the enthronement of an evil power beside the good."

The intellectuals who rejected the popular beliefs and fears made apologetic uses of demons. They interpreted them as intermediaries, thus making possible a genuine method of contact between transcendent deity and mortal humanity and saving the moral character of the gods. They also used them as weapons in their fight against the current superstitions that held the populace in the grip of fear. But their interpretations of the gods of the old faiths as demons must have seemed to the common people to give the sanction of the intellectuals to their own deep-seated fears.

Because of the persistence of this popular dread of demonic powers, exorcism was practiced for centuries before, during, and after the beginning of the Christian era. It was used by native Romans and by immigrant stocks from Greece and the Orient.

In the first century either the apotropaic or the expulsive element was involved in much of the official Roman ritual, in the ceremonies of the Mystery Religions and other imported cults, and in the private practice of professional exorcists. Procedures varied greatly in these different groups.

Many of the indigenous Roman practices were very ancient

but continued for centuries among the conservative populace.

(1) Official acts included a scapegoat ceremony, dancing and striking, sweeping, laughing, offering of sacrifices, acts of healing deities, spoken formulae, and prayer. (2) Rites of purification, considered very efficacious against evil forces, embraced various lustration rites; the use of potent objects called februa (such as fire, water, sulphur, salt, wool, blood, animal products, vegetable products); and unusual public rites such as games and Ludi Saeculares. (3) Amulets, generally made from stones, metals, plants, parts of animals, parts of the human body, and various objects associated with deity.

The methods employed by imported cults may be classed under two major types: religious healing and exorcism proper.

(1) Chief among the healing procedures were dream oracles, touching the patient, the use of drugs, surgery, serpents, bathing, and various miscellaneous practices. (2) Exorcism involved the use of a divine name, of other symbols of deity (seals, images, etc.), various forms of piety, union with deity.

The practices of the professional exorcists included (1) the use of names of deity, (2) the utterance of strange and unintelligible words and phrases, (3) names of angels, (4) names of great historical characters (especially exorcists), (5) syncretistic use of names, (6) use of exorcist's own name, (7) Scripture passages, (8) supplementary procedures accompanying the above, (9) miscellaneous methods.

All these practices were built upon a basic world view of supernaturalism. All significant activities and events were supernaturally controlled. Both cause and cure of the various ailments were of a superhuman character. Every method employed depended for its efficacy upon the application of a divine power superior to the attacking demonic spirit.

The official attitude of the political authorities toward all who practiced magic arts was one of bitter hostility, because of the possible dangers to the reigning emperor from these men who possessed such occult knowledge.

In the increasing complexity and cosmopolitanism of the imperial period, with its stress upon the needs of the individual, the old official methods of the Roman religion proved more and more inadequate to safeguard society against its invisible foes. Both the Mystery Cults and the independent exorcists were more flexible and their methods better suited to the changing needs of individuals. Hence these grew in favor as compared with the old Roman religion, especially among the people of foreign extraction. Nevertheless, the rites of the latter continued in use for centuries among the conservative old Roman stock.

There was a noticeable trend toward syncretism in the methods of demonic control during this period, to meet the needs of a cosmopolitan population. This was most characteristic of the activities of the professional exorcists but not limited to them.

The most adequate and permanent type of mastery over evil powers by any non-Christian group was offered by the Mystery Cults in their guarantee of realistic unity with the deity whose presence banished every demon in this present life and assured conquest over them in a blessed immortality.

People in the first century looked to religion for the release from hostile demons, and those cults which were most adequately meeting the vital religious needs of the time were successfully performing this important function.

D. Significance of Exorcism in the Gospel of Mark

Into this demon-infested atmosphere early Christianity came. It found the common people of the Roman world at the mercy of powerful hostile forces beyond their control. Political, economic, social, and cosmic forces seemed united in a vast conspiracy to crush out the average individual's chance for a satisfying life. The Gospel of Mark, the first extant record of the career of Christianity's founder, offers his readers this much-needed opportunity of achieving a satisfying life. This is made available through alliance with the divine Christ, who has conquered the demonic powers that menace human life.

In the Gospel of Mark Jesus' conquest of maleficent spirits occupies a position of basic importance at practically every stage in his official career. At baptism he was endowed with the divine Spirit and commissioned for his messianic task. Satan, the chief of the hierarchy of demonic hordes, at once challenged his authority but was worsted in the ensuing struggle. Having proved his divine authority by his mastery of Satan, Jesus began his program of inaugurating the messianic kingdom. The most significant part of that program was the conquest of Satan's demonic forces that wrought devastation everywhere in human society. With their leader they controlled the existing social order. As the leader of the forces of righteousness and the founder of the new Golden Age to be established in the near future, Jesus' major task was to crush the power of the satanic kingdom. The kingdom of God would come when the kingdom of Satan was overthrown. Every time Jesus expelled a demon from a human victim he gained an additional victory for the forces of righteousness and made an advance step toward the realization of the reign of God among men. But these

victories were also significant as proofs of Jesus' ability to continue his conquests by overcoming the demons that still menaced individuals and society. His mastery of these evil spirits in the past was symbolic of still greater victories to come in the future.

Mark pictures Jesus' power over demons at the very beginning of his public career and at every important step throughout his Galilean ministry. It was also central in his work when he took two brief excursions into Gentile territory. Only in Jerusalem was it eclipsed by other interests, but even here the dramatic events of the passion week represented the intense struggle between the kingdoms of God and of Satan. The forces of evil seemed for the moment to triumph, in Jesus' death, but his resurrection and exaltation to heaven proved his final mastery.

There are four major elements of the significance of Jesus' conquest of evil spirits as presented in Mark. (1) It brings a message of health to those suffering from the dread demons of disease. (2) It gives the assurance of protection and greater satisfaction in social relationships. (3) It guarantees victory over the ills of the current political order. (4) It makes available the highest possible religio-ethical values.

1. The Gospel of Health

The universal quest for physical and mental health was urgent in first-century Roman society. Many economic, social, and political conditions threatened the health of the common people. Emotional and nervous instability were particularly prevalent, and were generally interpreted as demon possession. These and allied ills were intensified by the paralyzing dread of enviroing cosmic powers that permeated the minds of the masses.

Mark shows that Jesus was a great hero-deity, who was possessed throughout his career by the Spirit of the Most High God, and who had mastered the demons that brought these ills to men. He was superior to the other hero-deities whose cults were well known in the empire. He was an actual historical character of unequalled personality and power who had lived during Tiberius' reign.

His divine status and authority had been attested repeatedly by the greatest characters in Hebrew history, by the demons with their superhuman knowledge, and even by God himself.

These high credentials had been paralleled by a versatile career as exorcist and healer. The author distinguishes between exorcism and other types of healings. The line of demarcation is sometimes very uncertain since demons were in some way responsible for all ailments. In addition to the expulsion of unclean spirits

from violent, epileptic, deaf and dumb demoniacs, Jesus had cured cases of leprosy, paralysis, hemorrhage, blindness, fever, deafness with stammering, and raised one girl from the dead, besides curing many unspecified diseases. Even his bitterest enemies acknowledged the actuality of his cures and attributed them to superhuman (though satanic) power.

Mark has little concern with presenting technical details of Jesus' methods of healing and exorcism, being far more interested in the great human values involved. But he shows some variations in procedure. (1) The touch of his hand is mentioned in most cases of general healing. (2) His powerful word of command drove out most of the demons. Sometimes the two were combined. (3) In isolated cases the use of saliva supplemented the other methods. (4) The importance of the patient's faith is repeatedly stressed. (5) Prayer is once mentioned as a prerequisite for exorcism. Jesus' apparent indifference to technique is in striking contrast with the elaborate procedures of many of the exorcists of the time. By it Mark shows that Jesus' power lay in his Spirit-endowed personality, which was far superior to all other qualifications and techniques.

Mark shows that Jesus' followers might also conquer evil spirits as some of the first disciples had done. The methods available for them included (1) the use of the name of Jesus, (2) anointing with oil, (3) faith, (4) prayer, (5) baptism, (6) the Lord's Supper, (7) endowment by the Holy Spirit. The secret of all these methods lay in the divine power which they brought to bear in the conquest of the demons. They might have within themselves the Holy Spirit, which would be a prophylactic against demonic assaults for themselves and a weapon to wield for freeing others from them.

2. Significance for Social Relationships

Roman life was filled with a multitude of religious cults of many types. The deities, temples, images, rites, and attitudes of these cults were closely interwoven with every aspect of the whole social order. The people lived in an atmosphere of supernaturalism that literally permeated all life. The Christians, like the Jews, regarded all these deities as demons that threatened their welfare.

Mark shows that Jesus' great power over evil spirits provides protection for his followers who face these perils. Six aspects of this problem are given consideration: (1) protection from demon-infected foods, (2) security in family relationships, (3) safety in general business and social contacts, (4) assurance

of a more exalted social status, (5) economic advantages, (6) community benefits.

(1) Practically all animals that were used for food were slaughtered with sacrificial rites to some deity or deities. By such rites of dedication to a god his spirit came to permeate the meat. The eater then took the deity into himself with the food. While this was considered highly desirable by the devotees of the various cult-deities, it was abhorrent to the Christians, for it meant the bringing of demons into their bodies. Mark counsels avoidance of such dangers as far as possible, but offers protection in case the contact is unavoidable. The Holy Spirit by which the Christian was endowed at baptism was a potent prophylactic against unclean spirits. This divine essence was augmented by participation in the Lord's Supper, which realistically gave the devotee more of his divine Lord as a protection against demonic harm of all kinds.

(2) Many family rites and customs brought one into constant contact with ghosts of the ancestors and other harmful invisible forces. Christians are advised to shun all unnecessary perils of this kind. But when their legitimate interests made such contacts inevitable, they could be assured of mastery over the malicious forces through the power of the Spirit.

(3) Business and general social relationships were likewise "demon-inspired and demon-infested," for all trades, occupations, public spectacles, religious gatherings, and other forms of social intercourse were under the supervision of superhuman powers. Here also avoidance of contact was desirable, but the Spirit-possessed Christian was inoculated against the possible menace involved in such contacts.

(4) The devotee of the Christian cult, even though he occupied a lowly status in the general social order, had been raised by Christ to a high dignity in the Christian society. This highly-favored group formed the nucleus of the new righteous social order that was to succeed the present demon-controlled regime. Even the slave could conquer the most powerful demons through alliance with his divine Lord. Thus he became master of superhuman powers to whom even the mighty Emperor owed allegiance.

(5) Mark shows that membership in the Christian group even gave economic advantages, through greater health, greater stability in occupational life, freedom from medical fees, and varied blessings associated with the cult. They would receive a hundredfold in return for everything it cost them.

(6) The conquest of evil spirits by Jesus and his followers also brought blessings to the whole community by freeing the people from the menace of the demoniacs who often imperiled the public

safety. Thus Christianity meant greater security, freedom, and joy to the individual, to the Christian society, and even to the whole community.

3. Values for Political Life

For the Christians the whole of the political order was under satanic control. This present evil age must be overthrown before men could enjoy the glories of a righteous reign. The complete subservience of the masses to an autocratic government that was inconsiderate of their welfare strengthened the conviction of its demonic character. It was also intensified by the cruelty, chaos, and bloodshed of the Neronian terror and the years that followed. Persecution of the Christians made a bitter antagonism inevitable between the established regime and their kingdom of righteousness. For Mark, the empire was Antichrist, the supreme human God-opposing power and Satan's powerful ally.

In the light of this great conflict Jesus' conquest of demons had far greater significance than the restoration to health of possessed individuals. It was the advance-movement in the inauguration of the new social and political order that would supplant the existing satanic society. In his work of exorcism Jesus was performing a major function expected of the Apocalyptic Messiah. The task would be completed with the coming of the new kingdom in its fullness.

To the Christians who were suffering persecution it was extremely significant to know that the mighty persecuting power was not omnipotent or permanent. It would be destroyed at the coming of the victorious Christ in his messianic glory. Then those who are linked with this mighty conqueror of Satan and his hosts (both demonic and human) are assured of a complete triumph over all their enemies and a glorious participation in the new and perfect political order.

4. Its Religio-Ethical Significance

In this realm were the supreme aspects of Mark's message. They are considered under four major interests: (1) a sense of cosmic security, (2) the assurance of victory over death, (3) an increased sense of the moral worth of human personality, (4) an intimate group fellowship.

(1) People were living in an atmosphere of cosmic insecurity and dread as the natural outgrowth of the instability of prevailing conditions. They had little opportunity to find a real home in a friendly universe. Religion must give just such guarantees, since man's supreme enemies were powerful cosmic forces of evil. The

current Mystery Cults insured deliverance from those hostile powers. Mark makes it clear that Jesus also was the conqueror of these demons, having been victorious over them repeatedly during his career. Before the final consummation of the messianic program other hostile astral powers would be overthrown to complete the universal reign of Christ. Mark assures his readers that through alliance with this divine Christ they too may be victorious over these threatening powers. He has made possible the mastery of fear that has haunted their lives. Through him they can be at home in a friendly universe.

(2) Death was the last great cosmic enemy of man. Religion must guarantee mastery over this universal foe in order to insure the full satisfaction of all human needs. Contemporary cults were insuring this victory through the devotee's sharing in the divine life of a dying-and-rising deity. Mark presents Jesus as the great hero-deity who had broken the power of Satan by his triumph over death. Those who are endowed by the divine Spirit may share in that victory and in the assurance of a blessed immortality.

(3) To people who were living in constant dread of demonic perils, the message of Mark came as a glorious release from an awful bondage. It brought freedom from a deadly fear that had crushed and paralyzed moral initiative. It instilled new hope and courage, developed stamina and self-respect, and opened the way for the growth of all positive moral qualities. It made possible the real integration of frustrated, divided, morbid, and "inferior" personalities, giving the sense of moral worth and mastery that are indispensable to genuinely moral living. This increased sense of the moral worth of personality came through the experience of union with deity. The realistic presence of the divine Spirit within the devotee transformed his nature. It gave a strictly metaphysical basis for all Christian morality. It drove out all demonic influences and gave a confident hope of moral victory in all struggles and persecutions, for the individual was reinforced and empowered by his indwelling deity.

(4) This sense of divine companionship and guidance found its fullest meaning and expression in an intimate Christian group fellowship. The deepest religious experiences were shared experiences. It was the cult-group that mediated the Spirit-endowment through the rite of baptism, and augmented and renewed the realistic union with deity through the Lord's Supper.

Christians were sharers in a common Spirit, followers of a common Lord, partakers of a common faith, and sharers in a common task. They were bound together in the greatest enterprise ever undertaken by man--the work of building for the new Golden Age soon to be actualized in human society. Such an experience

gave the individual wholesome recognition, self-respect, and moral worth that were of inestimable value.

E. Christian versus Non-Christian Exorcism

How did Christian methods of conquering demonic forces compare with those of other cults and of private exorcists? In particular, what, if any, advantages did Christianity have in its solution of this vital problem?

1. Christianity's Superiority to Judaism

As compared with Judaism, the new faith had decided advantages. It enjoyed all the prestige which descent from Judaism had given it in the Roman world, without the nationalistic limitations and social unpopularity of Jewish exclusiveness. Hence it could have free access to people of every race, nation, and class. Its dynamic Spirit-endowment, with its consequent deeds of power, gave it the decided edge over the older, legalistic faith.

2. Its Superiority to Roman Methods

Christianity met the problem of conquering hostile spirit powers more adequately than the old Roman faith because it was far better adapted to the needs of the time. Instead of being bound down by ancient procedures suited to a rural type of life, it was fresh and vigorous, the product of the complex, cosmopolitan life of the first century. Its methods were simple, direct, for the individual, yet strengthened by the type of emotional appeal demanded by the needs of the time.

3. Superiority to the Mystery Cult Procedures

The new faith had much in common with the Mystery Cults in its conquest of demons. Both gave ample place to the emotional element; both were dynamic; both provided the benefits of union with a deity as a powerful means of protection and the special privileges of sharing in the mysteries of the cult. Christianity had an advantage in the fact of an historical figure as her deity--one who had lived during the early days of the empire, and whose high moral character and heroic career made a powerful appeal to those in need of divine help. His association with Yahweh, "the Most High God," was another advantage of no little value. Moreover the appeal of the Christian movement to every class, even the moral outcasts, won a hearty response from many who were seeking the benefits of religion.

4. Superiority to the Professional Exorcists

In comparison with the professional exorcists, Christianity presented methods of greater simplicity. The use of the name of Jesus as a single, all-sufficient name for mastering all evil powers was far superior to the elaborate techniques of the free-lances. Moreover, the use of the names of the deities of many cults by the latter tended to make their methods seem secondary. Why not go to the original authorities at first hand? All of the religious groups that practiced exorcism, including Christianity, had the advantage over the professionals because of the greater human concern which they manifested. The procedure with them was not merely a business transaction. People had more confidence in them because of the more inclusive benefits which they bestowed. Christianity was working at a decided advantage also in that it made no financial charges for services rendered. Thus its benefits were as available to the common people as to those of high rank in society.

Christianity's claims to superiority in this as well as in other fields of interest--even to the point of intolerance--also came to be recognized as a factor making for her success. Her claim to have the one and only adequate divine name and authority for mastering demonic forces proved to be a decided benefit. The followers of Jesus also offered a more inclusive conquest of evil spirits, in every aspect of experience, than any other cult, and this contributed to their greater success. Christianity guaranteed a full salvation from the ravages of the demonic hordes.

